

Dangers of Cigarette Smoking

To the Editor.—Barach's critical letter of June 1, 1970 (212:1525, 1970) concerning the American Cancer Society's television announcements about the dangers of cigarette smoking had a puzzling assortment of quotations and statements. The sentence, "No one has yet shown that to dwell on the thought of saving one's life is morally or physically healthful," is certainly contrary to the physician's responsibility in preventing disease, preserving, and improving the state of individual health.

Barach's worry about the charisma of the physician who "increasingly devotes himself to warnings" is countered by asking the public if they would retain confidence in physicians who fail to warn them of threats to their health and well being. Should physicians divorce themselves from concern over the lack of pure water, immunizations, proper diets, and the dangers of cigarette smoking? I think not. Public health measures are positive or prohibitory according to the reception given to them.

The writer is misinformed about the intent of many physician spokesmen on the health hazards of smoking. For many years we have suggested the following:

- (1) Don't inhale.
- (2) Smoke only the outer half of the cigarette.
- (3) Use low-tar cigarettes with a filter tip (or accessory filter).
- (4) Smoke less than ten cigarettes daily.
- (5) Switch to pipe or cigars and don't inhale.

The tardy shift of tobacco manufacturers to low-tar cigarettes could have been done ten years earlier without a loss of sales. They could and should reduce the tar content to below 10 mg; and saleable cigarettes with a tar content of about 5 mg should even be possible.

If the trend to smoke less and the increased use of low-tar cigarettes continues, I predict that there will be a discernible drop in the incidence of lung cancer in men by 1975.

*George E. Moore, MD
Buffalo*

Letters

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